THE TENNESSEE WARBLER

Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

August, 2021 Editor, Theresa Graham

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer has arrived in Tennessee: our winter visitors are long gone, spring migrants arrived and passed through, and young have fledged. People continue to get vaccinated, sporting events and other activities are back on, and a return to normalcy has begun. The Memphis chapter hosted two outdoor meetings, and it was wonderful to see some people that I had not seen for over a year.

In early May, TOS had a virtual Spring Board of Directors (BOD) meeting. The BOD meeting was long but productive, and I thank everyone who participated for their service to TOS. I am pleased to report that TOS remains in a strong financial position and that our number of members continues to grow. Welcome, new members!

Our fall 2021 BOD meeting will be held virtually on October 4th. **I am excited to announce that Memphis will host the TOS Spring Meeting April 22nd – 24th.** I hope that many of you will join us for a weekend of birding with friends.

Beginning in June 2022, *The Tennessee Warbler* will be moved to digital only (beginning with the August issue). At least for now, TOS will continue to print and mail issues of *The Migrant*. Moving *The Tennessee Warbler* to digital only will save printing and mailing costs, freeing those funds to focus on our mission to promote the study and conservation of Tennessee's birds. One of those efforts, the *Discover Bird Activity Book*, has been a smashing success. About 3,000 books were distributed last year, and nearly 40,000 books have been handed out to children since its inception. TOS will print field cards that will include the TOS logo for our use and to pass along to newer birders.

The new TOS website has proven to be a great asset. The Events page provides action alerts, announcements, and timely info (such as the dates and location of the Spring Meeting). *The Tennessee Warbler* is available at the site, and TOS intends to use the site to provide easy-to-access information on conservation issues, policies, and bills so that members can remain informed and contact their senators and representatives. Lastly, a slate of officers was elected: Cyndi Routledge (Secretary), Pam Lasley (Treasurer), and VPs Chris Welsh (East TN), Danny Shelton (Middle TN), and Dick Preston (West TN). I thank each of them for their continued service to TOS.

I wish you all a safe and enjoyable summer.

Michael Collins
President

This year's supplement to the official *Check-list of North American Birds* makes several changes at the genus level — for grouse, kinglets, cormorants, and other species. It also splits a few species from related birds found outside Canada and the United States. And it rearranges the sequence of 69 families of the continent's passerines (songbirds).

The birds previously known as Mew Gull have been separated into two species: **Short-billed Gull** of North America and **Common Gull** of Asia and Europe. The committee based the split "largely on differences in display vocalizations," and it noted "the species also show genetic and morphological differences and had been treated as conspecific [the same species] based on weak evidence."

Cape Verde Storm-Petrel (*Hydrobates jabejabe*), a small seabird that lives year-round at the Cape Verde Islands of the eastern Atlantic Ocean, has been split from **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (*H. castro*), which is found in the Gulf of Mexico and the western Atlantic.

Crested Caracara of North America and northern South America is being lumped with **Southern Caracara**, which is found in most of South America. The lumped species will be known as Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*). The two had been split only two decades ago but are considered one species again in part because of extensive hybridization in the Amazon region.

Sedge Wren is now split from its nonmigratory relative, **Grass Wren**. Sedge Wren breeds in the Great Plains and Great Lakes region and winters mainly in the southeastern U.S. Grass Wren is found from Mexico south to Chile, Argentina, and the Falkland Islands.

Barred Owl is being split from **Cinereous Owl**, which is found in a handful of locations in Mexico. The split is based on differences in voice, mitochondrial DNA, habitat, and plumage.

Bahama Nuthatch is being spilt from **Brown-headed Nuthatch**. After Hurricane Dorian in 2019, the Bahama birds may be extinct.

West Mexican Euphonia is being split from **Scrub Euphonia**. The new Mexican endemic species is found on the country's Pacific slope. Scrub Euphonia is found from southern Mexico to Costa Rica.

St. Kitts Bullfinch is being recognized as a species distinct from **Puerto Rican Bullfinch**. Sadly, the St. Kitts bird hasn't been seen since 1929 and is listed as extinct.

Spruce Grouse is being returned to the genus *Canachites*.

Five of North America's cormorants are moving genera. **Great Cormorant** remains in the genus *Phalacrocorax*. **Brandt's, Red-faced,** and **Pelagic** are moving to the genus *Urile*, and **Double-crested** and **Neotropic** are moving to *Nannopterum*.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet is moving to its own genus: *Corthylio*. The change distinguishes the species from Golden-crowned Kinglet, which remains in *Regulus*.

Five-striped Sparrow, a bird of Mexico and southeastern Arizona, moves to *Amphispizopsis* and out of the genus *Amphispiza*, which it shared with Black-throated Sparrow.

Java Sparrow, an Asian species that is established in Hawai'i, is now in the genus *Padda*.

Lavender Waxbill, a finch of central Africa that is found in Hawai'i, is moving to *Glaucestrilda*.

Check-list of North American Birds - Continued from Page 2

The committee considered but rejected splits to Magnificent Frigatebird, Swainson's Thrush, and Rufous-backed Robin. And it said no to a proposal to lump McKay's Bunting and Snow Bunting.

For more information on the changes to the check-list, you can download a PDF of the announced changes from Oxford University Press or see this post from the American Birding Association.

Article credited to https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com for summary of changes to ABA list.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

TOS is looking for someone to submit the Middle Tennessee Seasons report for *The Migrant*. Records are submitted four times a year and obtained from TN-bird and eBird rare bird alerts. This is an opportunity to keep track of rare sightings and to get to know other birders in the Highland Rim and Basin region. If you are interested, please contact TOS president Michael Collins (collinsm@rhodes.edu) or your chapter president for more information.

WHAT ARE ACTION ALERTS?

Action Alerts are important conservation initiatives, usually with time sensitive deadlines, that your Tennessee Ornithological Society's Conservation and Policy Committee (CPC) have researched and recommend supporting as part of our Society's ongoing mission to "protect and conserve birds that occur in Tennessee."

As an effort to bring these initiatives to your attention, and make it easy for you as a member and someone who cherishes birds to respond to these alerts, the CPC has made them easy to find on the new TOS webpage (www.tnbirds.org). They can be located on the News page of our website and within those alerts there is often a link that will take you to organizations such as The American Bird Conservancy (ABC), a 25-year-old organization dedicated to 'conserving wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.' (https://abcbirds.org)

In June of this year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released the *Birds of Conservation Concern for 2021*. (https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/birds-of-conservation-concern.php) This publication includes **269 bird species** protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which itself is under attack and being gutted, that are of conservation concern. In other words, birds that are in trouble. On the heels of Cornell's 2019 study documenting the loss of 3 billion birds since 1970, the FWS report reaffirms the need to take strong action to help the birds we love from further decline in numbers. Among the species listed as birds of concern there are 35 species of shorebirds, 63 species of seabirds, 16 raptor species, 19 warbler species, 12 sparrow species, 5 Nightjars, 6 North American hummingbird species and 107 other avian species that need our help or they'll soon disappear forever.

So how can you, as one person help?
A simple and easy way is to respond to these Action Alerts! Be aware of them by checking the TOS News page at least monthly, visit the ABC site even more often, volunteer to join the CPC committee, spend the few minutes it takes to review the initiative and sign on through the provided link or, if you're so inclined, write your own letter. Become part of the solution; be a voice for the birds. Each person can make a difference, especially when you join with others who fight day in and day out to save the species we love.

So please start today by responding to this Action Alert to help save and strengthen the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. https://tnbirds.org/news/

Cyndi Routledge, CPC Member

BIRD SAFE BUILDINGS ACT

The Bird Safe Buildings Act (BSBA) was first introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) in 2010. The bill failed in the House, and was not taken up in the Senate. Congressman Quigley has reintroduced the bill in each succeeding congress, and finally, in 2019, it passed in the House, as an amendment to a larger funding bill. However, it again failed to achieve support from the Senate.

In March, Congressman Quigley reintroduced the bill in the House. It currently has 14 cosponsors. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) has introduced it in the Senate, but there are no cosponsors as yet.

This cost-neutral legislation requires that each public building constructed, acquired, or significantly altered by the General Services Administration incorporate bird-safe building material and design features to the maximum extent possible. “Almost one third of American bird species are currently endangered and fatal collisions with built structures is a significant cause. We have a responsibility to prevent as many of these deaths as possible,” said Congressman Quigley.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC), among others, estimates that as many as one billion birds die each year across North America in collisions, primarily with windows. Now is the time to express your opinion. Please consider contacting your members of Congress.

Additional information: www.abcbirds.org

Editor’s note: TOS is a member organization of the American Bird conservancy

BIRDS FLYING SAFER OVER ILLINOIS

The state of Illinois is now on record as acknowledging that migratory bird protections resulting from “bird-safe buildings” are important.

In May, a bill passed both houses of the Illinois legislature establishing some thoughtful building standards for state-owned buildings. This provides that each state building constructed, acquired or altered (when more than 50% of the façade is substantially changed) must meet specified bird safety standards. This addresses the problem of causing needless bird deaths by creating guidelines for all future construction and renovation projects on state-owned buildings in order to reduce glass and make buildings more visible for birds. It would also require certain changes in lighting standards.

While the new law is not all-encompassing and has a few loopholes, it’s a significant step forward. According to supporters it encourages more companies to design bird-friendly building products for state projects. And it can also help promote the spread of bird-safe features. There is also the possibility that these guidelines will become a model for local zoning for new construction, renovation, and hopefully at some point retrofitting of existing buildings.

Source: The Birding Community E-Bulletin, June 2021

An archive of past E-bulletins may be accessed on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin.

GLOBAL BIG DAY 2021

On Saturday, May 8th, more than 51,000 people from 192 countries celebrated the birds around them for Global Big Day. Together, the birding community accomplished four world records: the greatest number of birders, from the most countries, reporting more species and submitting more checklists on a single day of birding than ever before.

Total number of checklists submitted via eBird (www.ebird.org) during this 24 hour event: 139,993; number of species reported: 7,282; number of photographs submitted: 69,311. Birders in the United States submitted the greatest number of these checklists (76,298), followed by Canada (19,835), Argentina (3,235), Spain (3,057), Venezuela (2,878), Costa Rica (2,812), Panama (2,565), India (2,279), Columbia (1,958) and Australia (1,901). Birders in Peru reported the most species (1,352), followed by Columbia (1,212), Ecuador (1,122), Brazil (992), Bolivia (898), Kenya (812), Mexico (775), Venezuela (755), Argentina (756), and the United States (729).

Now in its 19th year, eBird also achieved another milestone during Global Big Day: an Australasian Swamphen at a park in Sydney, Australia, was the one billionth bird observation. More than 684,300 eBirders from 202 countries have now submitted more than 77,446,000 checklists.

Source: Cornell University Lab of Ornithology (eBird).
For more details: www.ebird.org

Editor's note: totals current at press time.

Spring Count Data Now Due

The Spring bird count data are due as soon as possible to allow me to get my report in to the editor of *The Migrant* in a timely fashion. Besides the actual count data, please be sure to include the following effort data:

1. Hours and miles by car, foot, and any night birding
2. Number of observers and parties
3. Any feeder watching hours & names
4. Start and end times for the count
5. Weather data for the count
6. Names of all the participants

Compilers: please try to use a bird checklist that is based on somewhat recent taxonomy. This greatly speeds up my job compiling these reports. Our green TOS field cards are usually up-to-date.

If you do not have a local compiler, you can send the data directly to me at the address/email below.

TOS appreciates your efforts to record and track our bird populations and abundance. Thanks for helping us to archive this data for future generations and researchers.

Ron Hoff, TOS State Bird Count Compiler
166 Chahyga Way • Loudon, TN 37774 • 865-567-9679
webe2brdrs@gmail.com

TOS PARTNERS WITH SWAN CONSERVATION TRUST TO FUND 140-ACRE LAND ACQUISITION

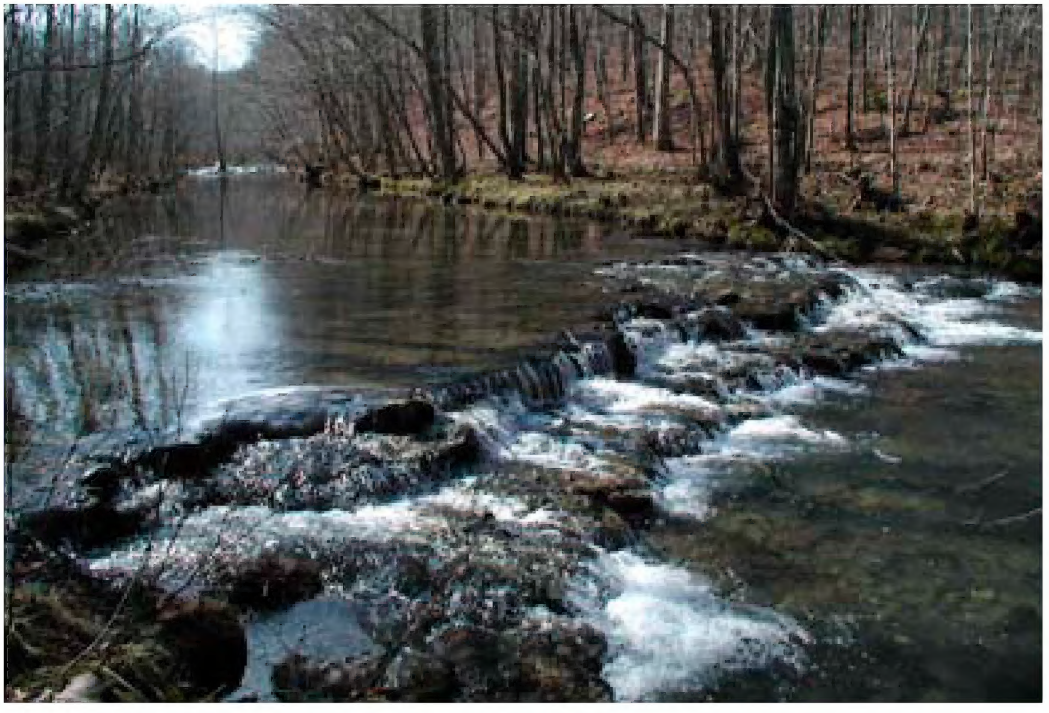
TOS has partnered with Swan Conservation Trust on a federal grant to assist in the purchase of a 140-acre tract in Lewis County, Tennessee. Over 50 species of birds were observed during a single tour of the property, including 12 species on the lists of priority birds for the Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region. TOS provided Swan Trust with $5,000 in May 2021 and will donate another $5,000 in May 2022, as matching funds toward a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) small grant. The $75,000 NAWCA grant was approved in February 2021, greatly aided by TOS' partnership and matching funds.

Swan Conservation Trust is a 501(c)3 land trust with a mission to preserve, protect, and restore native hardwood forests, scenic natural areas, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and water quality on Tennessee's Western Highland Rim (www.swantrust.org). In 2004, Swan Trust established Big Swan Headwaters Preserve in Lewis County by acquiring contiguous tracts of land beginning in 1998. Numerous grants and donations over the years made the acquisitions possible. With hardwood forests, headwater streams, waterfalls, over 50 calcareous seeps, two restored fields (native grasses and wildflowers), and rare plants, the Preserve provides excellent habitats for neotropical migratory songbirds and year-round resident birds.

Swan Trust's first purchase for the Preserve was a 309-acre tract that included Star Branch, a major tributary of Big Swan Creek. The new 140-acre acquisition is adjacent to the original Star Branch tract. It encompasses all the headwater streams that become Star Branch and contains a 0.8-acre calcareous seep, which is a type of wetland that contributes clean groundwater to streams year-round, while providing habitat for flora and fauna that specialize in these seeps.

As reported on TOS' website (https://tnbirds.org), North American bird populations declined by 29% or almost 3 billion birds since 1970. One of the largest factors of bird population decline is the widespread loss and degradation of habitat due to agricultural intensification and urbanization. TOS' partnership in matching funds for protection of bird habitat is crucially important at this time in our planet's history. The Board and members of Swan Trust are extremely grateful for TOS' support!

Cynthia Rohrbach
Project Manager/ biologist
Swan Conservation Trust
www.swantrust.org



Big Swan Headwaters Preserve in winter. Photo by Douglas Stevenson

CHAPTER NEWS

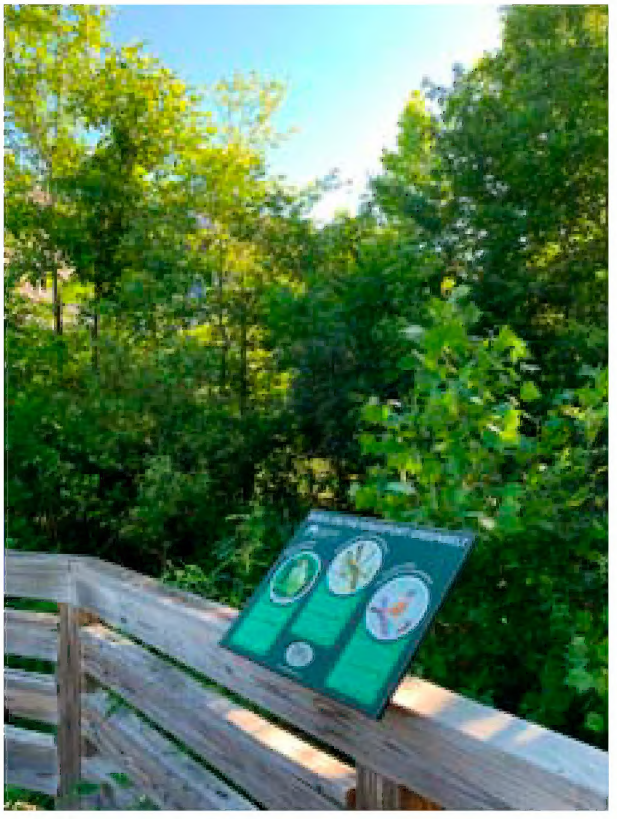
BIRDING KINGSPORT resumed in-person activities with a bird walk on the Kingsport Greenbelt in April. We had over 20 participants, and it was great to see everyone again. In May we hosted our club meeting in a large outdoor shelter at a local recreation area, and we welcomed Cyndi Routledge from Nashville TOS who presented a wonderful informative program on hummingbirds. In June, we held our traditional club picnic at the foot of Bays Mountain and featured a program on the history of Bays Mountain. We also went birding in June on the Erwin Linear Trail. Attendance at our events has been good and we are all enjoying gathering together again.

Birding Kingsport also participated in the Northeast Tennessee Five County Spring Bird Count organized by the Lee & Lois Herndon TOS Chapter (Elizabethton).

During 2020, Birding Kingsport worked with the City of Kingsport Parks & Recreation Department to design three new educational signs for the Wetlands Boardwalk section of the Kingsport Greenbelt (KBT). These signs, installed in early March 2021, highlight seven bird species seen in the area. They also complement an earlier project, "Birds on the Kingsport Greenbelt", which consisted of educational panels placed on several informational kiosks around the Kingsport Greenbelt. These projects were funded in part with a generous grant from the TOS Educational Subcommittee. A special thanks to Belinda Bridwell, Susan Hubley, Betty Bailey and our wonderful graphic designer, Kelly Barnette, for their assistance on this project.

Information on Birding Kingsport can be found at www.birdingkingsport.org.

Happy Birding!
Helen Sirett
President, Birding Kingsport



New educational signs for Wetlands Boardwalk section of the Kingsport Greenbelt. Photos: Helen Sirett

CHAPTER NEWS

On Thursday, June 17, members of the executive committee met with the Mayor of Red Bank Tennessee to discuss the construction of a swift roosting tower at White Oak Park. Barbara Johnson, the **CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER** Historian has developed a brochure about Chimney Swifts and the importance of preserving their nesting and roosting sites. She has made a list of significant sites in our area. Our chapter will begin promoting Swift Night Out events as the projects moves forward.

Ray Zimmerman
Newsletter Editor

The Hamilton County Migration Count was held on May 1, 2021. 18 participants found 139 species. Highlights included:

1 Least Bittern (Standifer Gap)
1 Snowy Egret (Amnicola Marsh)
2 Sora
1 Mississippi Kite (Possum Creek Boat ramp)
1 Red-breasted Nuthatch (Signal)
27 species of warblers including Black-throated Blue
1 Dickcissel (Riverport)

Thanks for everyone's help!

Kevin Calhoon
Count Compiler

The **HIGHLAND RIM CHAPTER** had our first in-person meeting on June 1st. It may have only been a planning meeting, but we sure had a lot of catching up to do. After about thirty minutes we got down to business, planning our upcoming year. We will meet again in July to finalize our plans, and will officially kick off our new year in August at the home of Darrell and Jean Gibson

It is with deep sadness I announce the passing of our founding member Ruth Williams Luckado.

Janie Denis, Secretary

Ruth Williams Luckado
May 7th, 2021

Ruth was born in Elizabethton, TN. She was a founding member of the Highland Rim Chapter and a great friend to many. Through her love of birds and nature she instilled the love of birds in others.

After college Ruth Williams married Thomas Luckado. They had four children-Thomas Jr., Ann, Robert and Michael.

Ruth is still remembered by the many students from East Middle School of Tullahoma where she taught science for over twenty years.

She was an expert birder, and after her retirement she traveled all over the United States and abroad. Ireland, Scotland, England and China were some of the places she enjoyed viewing birds.

Ruth was also an avid reader and enjoyed visiting Johnson City to attend the Jonesborough National Storytelling Festival as often as possible.

As her son Michael said, "Mom had the gift of gab and a zest for life."

Ruth will be forever loved, remembered and greatly missed.

Janie Denis, Secretary HRC/TOS

CHAPTER NEWS

The **KNOXVILLE CHAPTER** continued the spring period with virtual Zoom meetings. Attendance was excellent, and we even started getting a fair number of members from the East Tennessee Birding Facebook group joining in for the programs. In May we held a potluck dinner at Lakeshore Park which was our first post-Covid, in-person meeting other than walks.

Spring migration on Sharp's Ridge was a little below average this year. KTOS held its normal 3 Thursday morning walks on the ridge. Seven Islands State Birding Park on the other hand had a spectacular Spring. The Park has climbed up to be one of the top 5 hotspots in Tennessee for the year. It recently recorded its first Mississippi Kite and Snowy Egret bringing its total count to over 215. Kyker Bottoms also had a great Spring with a cooperative King Rail and its repeated nesting pair of Least Bitterns.

In May, KTOS partnered with the Tennessee Master Gardeners to put in a new native shrub garden at Collier Preserve. Dr Bob Collier, longtime KTOS member, donated this property in Powell to Legacy Parks to turn into a new Knox County Park. Unfortunately, Bob passed away last Christmas before the park was completed. KTOS donated $1,000 for plants then helped on planting day with several Master Gardeners to put in around 100 native plants.

Membership has been booming. We are sure it's Covid related, but KTOS has also stepped-up recruiting efforts a lot over the last several months. We have also been working on a new initiative to team with the Kingsport, Elizabethton, and Chattanooga chapters to begin offering a monthly virtual Zoom program on birds and birding in East Tennessee. All club members will be invited, but we will also reach out to Facebook groups, Wild Birds Unlimited members, State Parks users and other bird related organizations. The main idea is to try to get more people interested in birdwatching and hopefully join our clubs.

The **LEE & LOIS HERNDON BIRD CLUB** held the eighth consecutive Unicoi County Summer Bird Count Saturday, June 5. Nineteen observers in seven parties found 109 species. According to Rick Knight, the compiler for the count, the total is right on the average of the previous seven years. The range since the start of this yearly count has been between 104 to 112 species. The weather was good with a temperature span of 53 to 88 degrees, clear to partly cloudy skies and little to no wind.

The 28th Carter County Summer Bird Count was held on June 12 with 28 observers. The weather was less than optimal. Rain fell for much of the day. Dense fog on Roan Mountain and other high elevations was encountered. As a result, birdsong was reduced in many areas. Thus, numbers of individuals were low for many species, especially songbirds. Despite this, the count tallied 116 species which is just one shy of the recent 10-year average and actually two above the average of the previous 27 years. So, not bad considering the weather, thanks to the dedication of the observers. Even better, fully vaccinated individuals got to carpool and bird more closely together than in many of the counts conducted in 2020.

The chapter is also tentatively planning a summer picnic and a return to in-person meetings if a location can be found that will work. Most members have responded well to the Zoom meetings. Technological blips have been few and far between.

The chapter held a public bird walk in May at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park, Elizabethton, with an impressive turnout. People are really wanting to enjoy sociable activities, including birding.

The chapter will conduct its five-county fall bird count in September and will also complete its annual Christmas Bird Counts for Roan Mountain and Elizabethton.

Bryan Stevens, Editor

CHAPTER NEWS

After what seemed like an eternity, the **NASHVILLE CHAPTER** held its first in-person meeting on May 20th. Although we might have occasionally seen each other on a field trip, out and about, or on a Zoom call, the feeling of joy and elation to finally be together in the same room was palatable. Yes, some familiar faces were missing but there were many new faces and half-a-dozen first time visitors. We look forward to getting to know these new folks and welcome each one to our chapter. And when the time is right, we hope to see those old friends that weren't quite ready to return to an inside meeting. The good news is our Chapter grew by 30% during the Pandemic. A by-product none of us expected but fully embrace and welcome!

We held our spring bird count on May 1st thanks to coordinator Barbara Harris and compiler Scott Block. Thirty-five birders plus the TN Naturalist Class at Owl's Hill counted 155 species overall on a beautiful spring day. Highlights included a Black-Throated Blue Warbler on the Harpeth East route, a Sedge Wren at Bell's Bend, and a Grasshopper Sparrow and a Black-bellied Whistling Duck in Cheatham County.

This spring we also held three of our annual Wednesday morning Radnor Lake migration walks. Over 100 birders joined us on those 3 consecutive Wednesday hikes. Many were new birders joining us for the first time, confirming once again that these walks continue to grow in popularity and provide excellent outreach in the Community. We will hold 4 Fall Wednesday morning Radnor walks beginning on September 22nd. We invite you to join us!

Our joint Window Strike conservation project with Metro Parks-Shelby Bottoms Nature Center is in the final stages of completion after two years of on and off work, paperwork delays and the COVID shutdown. With the last of the window film treatments finally being professionally installed on the tower windows, Shelby Bottoms will serve as showcase for what anyone can to do help minimize window strikes, a top killer of birds. Be it at home, place of business or local nature center, the correct application of simple DIY treatments to professionally installed window film does have a positive impact and helps save avian lives. Signage is being developed to explain the window applications on display and donors of the project will be recognized and thanked. A list of resources, material and vendor contact information will also be on hand. A reception date is in the works for the official unveiling and introduction to the public and local media. Watch Events on the TOS webpage - https://tnbirds.org/events/ for forthcoming information with regard. Best of all, to spite all the delays due to us humans, the birds are the ones benefitting. Window collisions at the Nature Center have dropped to nearly zero since the first of the window treatments were installed 2 years ago! A true testament that taking action can and does save birds.

NTOS held elections for Officers and State Directors for the next term at our June meeting. I'm happy to report that almost all those currently serving agreed to continue into the next term. We added a few first-time state directors…always great to see new folks stepping up and getting involved. Thanks to all for volunteering.

Finally, it's with great pleasure that I announce that NTOS has a new website that was launched at the end of June. TOS friend and web guru Amy Wilms, of Indiana Audubon, Rick Blanton, Pam Lasley and I have all been working to get it completed. Many thanks to these individuals as well as fellow NTOS photographers for lending us your best photos to enhance our site. Our new address is: www.nashvillebirds.org Check us out!

Happy birding,
Cyndi Routledge, President

OCTOBER 31ST DEADLINE

The deadline date for the December issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is October 31st. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

Submit Material To:
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(901) 489-0795
e-mail: 2graham@bellsouth.net

Send corrections & Change of Address Requests To:
plasley@comcast.net

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